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ABSTRACT

This study examined the existence and use of student-operated public relations/advertising agencies which operate outside the classroom as well as in conjunction with a class. Journalism programs in the United States which were listed as having a public relations sequence, major, emphasis, or concentration were surveyed; of these 110 responded for a response rate of 61.4%. Results showed that: (1) 17 student-operated agencies already existed and 8 schools were in the process of establishing such agencies; (2) 70% of those contacted indicated that an agency was very useful to a student's learning experience; (3) 16 of the 17 agencies were sponsored by the Public Relations Student Society of America; (4) the majority of schools had from 1 to 3 full and part-time public relations faculty and between 1 to 150 public relations students; and (5) most of the public relations educators contacted indicated that writing skills was still the weakest subject taught. Findings suggest that student-operated agencies appear to be a good idea in theory, while in practice it may take more effort to get such a project started than schools are able to provide. (Seven tables of data are included; 17 references, survey questions, telephone survey guidelines, and the survey answer sheet are attached.) (RS)

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Student Agency Experience

In Public Relations Education

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Introduction to Problem

Public relations educators and practitioners alike are struggling with the education of public relations students and those students' needs for practical as well as theoretical experience while in college. Education of public relations students has traditionally consisted of teaching public relations methods, techniques and theory. Recently, however, questions have been raised about other learning environments which may offer students valuable practical experience. One of these developments is the student-operated public relations/advertising agency or firm. These agencies operate outside the classroom as well as in conjunction with a class.

This study seeks to examine the on-going student-operated agency because of the opportunities this pedagogical tool can offer the public relations student for experiential learning. Ball State University has been a participant in this type of educational endeavor since 1976 with the creation of Limited Edition - a student-operated public relations/advertising agency. Since 1985, the agency has received funding from the Ball State University Department of Journalism.

The policies and procedures manual for Limited Edition states that: "(Limited Edition) provides clients with professional communication services and students with an opportunity to learn and develop public relations and advertising skills outside the classroom.

Limited Edition provides exposure to and development of many specific communication skills. The wide variety of activities encountered by agency personnel provides excellent career exploration opportunities in both public relations and advertising. Materials generated by students are extremely valuable in the development of portfolios for use in seeking internships and employment."[1]

As in any profession, the future of public relations depends on the quality of the students who will become practitioners. Van Slyke Turk noted: "Public relations can control its status and standards as a profession only when it also controls entry into the profession and the educational process involved in becoming a public relations practitioner."[2] For this purpose it is important to assess all aspects of the education public relations students are receiving. Both teaching methods and subject content must be evaluated as the profession changes and different demands are made on graduates and practitioners. "(Public relations) demands expert preparation and no longer can we tolerate the prevailing mediocrity of public relations education. It shames us all."[3]

An examination of academic preparation in other areas of study shows that the path to learning is perhaps more clear. Journalism students can produce newspapers and magazines. Advertising students can sell ads for their school publications. In contrast, few outlets to gain actual hands-on experience are available to public relations students other

[1] Ball State University, Limited Edition Operations Manual, 1989-90, p. 3.

[2] Judy Van Slyke Turk, "Management skills need to be taught in public relations," Public Relations Review, 15: 38-52, Spring, 1989.

[3] Frank Wylie, "Is education keeping pace with demands of the profession?" Public Relations Journal, 38: 20-22, February, 1982.

than the summer job or internship.

In a survey for the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education in May, 1985, which was represented by members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC), the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and the Speech Communication Association (SCA), a stunningly high ranking was given to the internship experience. "(This ranking) indicates that much more attention needs to be paid by educators and practitioners alike to assure the high quality of such experiences."[4]

If professionals and educators agree that it is necessary for public relations students to have hands-on experience, as this study suggests, then steps must be taken by both to ensure students have the opportunity to gain this experience as part of their college education. While internships seem to offer students an outlet to gain hands-on experience, it seems logical that a student-operated firm could also be used to teach practical skills. A review of the literature indicated limited research available on internships as teaching tools and there is little or no literature concerning these existing student-operated agencies and their pedagogical uses.

"The changing needs of public relations students must be addressed if they are to be prepared for their profession. The argument for change in public relations curricula is not new. Knowledgeable practitioners, educators, and business leaders have been calling for revisions for years,

[4] James Anderson, "By the books," Public Relations Journal, 42: 16-18, April, 1986.

yet change has not taken place."[5]

Although change has been requested for years, action seems come at a slow pace. "Public relations education will not approach the form in which it needs to be until we look at the public relations professional's total educational needs and then design the educational structure needed to achieve the needs."[6] This study will attempt to examine the existence of student-operated public relations agencies in accredited journalism programs and understand their use as tools in teaching public relations students today.

It is hoped by gathering further data about the existence and use of these organizations and the role they play, that a pathway toward improving public relations education can be identified.

[5] Gay Wakefield and Laura Perkins Cottone, "Education for the 80's and beyond," Public Relations Review, 12: 37-45, Summer, 1986.

[6] Melvin Sharpe, "Developing programs to help academia better prepare the next generation of practitioners," (Presented as a speech to the National Convention of the Public Relations Society of America) Spring, 1988.

Purpose of Study

A review of the literature found little research about the number of student-operated public relations/advertising firms within accredited journalism programs. A purpose of this study was to quantify the number of institutions participating in this form of education. The following research questions were the basis of the survey and their responses are included in this report:

1. Does your school participate in the student-operated agency experience?

2. Does your school perceive the agency experience as valuable to the overall education of public relations students?

3. Is this type of experience part of the formal curriculum and is it required for all your public relations students?

4. Who is the primary sponsor of your agency?

5. How large is your public relations program including number of full-time and part-time faculty and number of students enrolled in the program?

6. What do you perceive as the weakest area of public relations education today?

Literature Review

Walker (1984) traced the development of public relations education in an examination of quinquennial surveys since 1970. According to Walker, public relations education was the most examined topic by educators and practitioners alike. He noted that many questionnaires were sent out monthly to educators by the researchers conducting the latest research. In the 70's, public relations education was based in the liberal arts and sciences with journalism as the predominant home college. The 1980s saw public relations education continue to move toward a theoretical approach with more emphasis placed on developing skills and techniques. Active participation began to play a role in education with the development of student-run agencies. Public relations students could also participate in internships and work with professionals in the Professionals and Amateurs (Pro-Am) program.

An in-depth study in 1976 noted that a master's degree in public relations was desirable for students planning a career in public relations. Through a random survey of public relations programs at 30 different colleges and universities, Walker noted that classes stressed publicity and students were mainly getting the nuts and bolts of public relations. He also said that "creativity is the name of the game" and that of 100 syllabi, 23 were singled out for special mention for creativity. In conclusion, Walker said public relations students receive many writing courses, teachers have varied styles and use different texts and there is a strong reliance on students getting a

broad background of educational experience.[1]

Student-operated public relations agencies can be successful and productive said **Rayfield and Pincus (1987).** Students at California State University said they appreciated the opportunity to help administer and control group public relations projects. The student-run public relations agency was actually a class that Rayfield and Pincus referred to as a "coming-out" class. The course was designed to bridge the gap between the classroom and professional life. Each group of three to five students found a client with a problem to solve. Most clients were non-profit organizations. Students researched and prepared a comprehensive program, proposed it to the client, and evaluated their results. The teacher acted only as an advisor in this situation, approving the projects. The class was usually between 300-400 students, so class leaders were elected and the students were responsible for their own organization and management. These team leaders elected other team leaders until the project groups were formed. Leaders could be removed and team members fired at any time by majority vote of the team. According to Rayfield and Pincus, class evaluations ranged from negative to wonderful. An initial problem the class had was finding professionals who would allow the students to handle their cases, but after the first class, professionals were seeking the students. Overall the class instructors said that the class was invigorating and exhausting but satisfying to watch as the students made their own decisions and functioned together like a team despite the fact that

[1] Albert Walker, "Public relations education: 1983 survey and report," Public Relations Review, 10:18-29, Spring, 1984.

the school is a commuter school.[2]

Another hands-on learning experience was offered to seniors who participated in the Pro-Am program at Northern Illinois University. **Walker (1979)** explained how this unique class gave public relations students experience. The Pro-Am plan originated with a PRSSA chapter on the West Coast. Pro-Am paired a public relations senior with a public relations professional for one year. The first semester was a trial semester where students basically observed the work of the professionals. In the second semester, by mutual consent, the student continued the job as a Directed Individual Study. The students' assignments began with simple news release writing and work advanced at the student's rate. The advantage of the program was that students observed first hand the duties of a professional and the professional had a stake in the future of his/her profession. To succeed, the Pro-Am plan required cooperation from the professionals and educators, including the PRSSA-liaison committee or the PRSA chapter, the university and the public relations faculty. Walker stressed that the Pro-Am plan needs a written structure with a manual listing the objectives and recommended assignments. He also listed several mutual advantages of the Pro-Am plan including: (1) provided an outlet for professional service on the part of the Pro; (2) lets the Am decide if a public relations career is what he/she really wants; (3)helps the educator keep the curriculum relevant; (4) gives the Pro fresh view from the outside.[3]

Kendall (1980) says that "hands-on" experience is essential to the

[2] Robert Rayfield and David Pincus, "Students control in-class PR agency," Journalism Educator, 41: 45-47, Winter, 1987.

[3] Albert Walker, "Pro-Am plan helps PR graduates gain experience," Journalism Educator. 33: 14-16, January, 1979.

development of the public relations practitioner. This article is based on a survey of 115 journalism programs which examined the range and type of job experiences available to students. Kendall defined internship as a "media-related work experience at an on-the-job location, supervised by a professional practitioner, involving a student enrolled in an academically organized program requiring full-time work which provides salary and credit during a specified term." Kendall foundthe greatest variation in internship practice came in the number of hours of academic credit awarded for the number of work hours required. Most grades were A-F or Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Kendall stated that there needs to be better understanding by all educators of the differences between internship, practicum, apprenticeship, and Pro-Am experiences. This will allow standardization of terms and enable the educator to provide more uniformly competent employees for the demanding world of public relations. He also stated that there were usually more internships available than students to fill them and indicated the need for a national listing of available internships which would benefit students but be a challenge to obtain.[4]

The legitimacy of internships for academic credit was an issue which **Ciofalo (1989)** chose to research. Ciofalo stated that students and organizations benefit mutually from an internship program, but that credit is uneasily extended for activities that seem unrelated to the objectives expected of traditional classroom-based learning. He supported professionals saying they are often better teachers than faculty. But he also mentioned that these

[4] Robert Kendall, "Internship practices in public relations," Public Relations Review, 11: 30-37, Summer, 1980.

professionals might not have time to participate in the internship program. Ciofalo said that unless mass communication educators fully understood the nature of the learning that occurred in internships, they will never design appropriate learning models to bolster the experience. Internships offer the "nuts and bolts" knowledge of how society's institutions work and few courses within or outside journalism schools provide this applied learning. In conclusion, Ciofalo suggested the following: (1) more faculty need to inform themselves on the cognitive value of experiential learning; (2) the on-site supervisor should be appointed as adjunct faculty and develop clear learning objectives and evaluative procedures for the internship; (3) students should also be helped to find informal internships that would look good on their resume, not on their transcript. Finally he suggested that faculty incorporate more complex interdisciplinary theory into their design of internship education.[5]

In teaching public relations, **Wakefield and Cottone (1986)** noted that public relations educators need to stop talking and start doing. Wakefield and Cottone said instructors who preach proactive public relations over reactive public relations should begin teaching this philosophy. The authors also supported monitoring and adapting the curriculum based upon current trends in the field. Public relations education for the 1980s and beyond should: (1) respond to increased demand for public relations practitioners, (2) incorporate theoretical and methodological advancements in the field of communication, (3) prepare students for the broadening scope (nationally and internationally) of public relations, (4) require courses in planning,

[5] Andrew Ciofalo, "Legitimacy of internships for academic credit remains controversial," Journalism Educator, 43: 25-31, Winter, 1989.

management, human relations, business, speechwriting, advertising, design, etc.; and (5) determine specific needs of the public relations profession.[6]

Van Slyke Turk (1989) stated that preparing public relations students for entry-level positions is no longer sufficient and that professional programs now see it as their mission to prepare students for lifetime careers. Turk's research indicated that students need to be taught management skills along with technical skills. Data from her study, which was originally conducted by the Poynter Institute of Media Management and the Media Management and Economics Resource Center at the University of Minnesota, suggested that current practitioners and managers think students would be better prepared for work in their organizations if they learned more while they are still students about the business aspects of these organizations and about the non-communication aspects of their future public relations careers. Van Slyke Turk concluded that public relations can control its status and standards as a profession only when it also controls entry into the profession and she urged that students be taught planning, problem-solving, budgeting, and analytical skills as part of the public relations curriculum.[7]

Baxter (1985) conducted a survey of 200 PRSA members and found that public relations students planning careers in the corporate sector must make development of writing and other journalistic skills their first priority. The survey also named the MBA as the degree which offered the best

[6] Gay Wakefield and Laura Perkins Cottone, "Education for the 80's and beyond," Public Relations Review, 12: 37-45, Summer, 1986.

[7] Judy Van Slyke Turk, "Management skills need to be taught in public relations," Public Relations Review, 15: 38-52, Spring, 1989.

advanced education. The respondents ranked theory and techniques classes second priority and internship experience third in importance.[8]

What the future holds for public relations was the topic of a study by **Grunig (1989)**. Enrollments in public relations programs have increased substantially in recent years. In 1987, 15 percent of the graduates from schools of journalism and mass communication were in a public relations sequence. Large numbers of students are choosing public relations as majors but university administrators have still not dedicated adequate resources to public relations education. According to Grunig, public relations has always been the stepchild of another department and he feels public relations should be a separate department within a school or college of journalism with control of its own curriculum and resources. He also suggested that professional practitioners use their political and financial clout to lobby for university support.[9]

VanLeuven (1989) asked noted practitioners what is right and wrong about today's college public relations programs. Practitioners noted the lack of university resources allocated to public relations programs and under staffing of these programs as major weaknesses. He also noted that students need to understand finance, management theory, and organizational behavior. One other point emphasized is that public relations should have uniform standards. The idea of an advisory panel was listed as a way to help in fundraising and making curriculum decisions. Finally

[8] Bill Baxter, "Education for corporate public relations," Public Relations Review, 11: 38-41, April, 1986.

[9] James Grunig, "Teaching public relations in the future," Public Relations Review, 15: 12-23, Spring, 1989.

VanLeuven argued that educators don't use practitioners to their fullest extent.[10]

Kalupa and Allen (1982) studied the future of public relations in a 1980 field survey of practitioners and educators. There was 92.2 percent agreement overall by the 245 practitioners and educators that changes were needed in public relations education in the 80's to meet the needs of the profession. The five major areas were ranked in this order of importance (1) greater emphasis on basic writing and language skills; (2) on research techniques; (3) on electronic media; (4) on new technology; and (5) on internal communication.[11]

Wylie (1982) was asked by *Public Relations Journal* (along with three other senior public relations professionals) to comment briefly on the positives and negatives of present-day public relations education as it relates to needs of practitioners for qualified entry-level personnel. Wylie said that many courses were being taught by people who lack either basic knowledge or experience in the field. He said formal training is essential and that experience has value. According to Wylie, public relations can no longer tolerate the prevailing mediocrity of public relations education.[12]

Sharpe and Grunig (1985) (along with two other professionals) were asked by *Public Relations Journal* to assess what they felt was needed to

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[10] Jim VanLeuven, "Practitioners talk about the state of PR education," Public Relations Review, 15: 5-11, Spring, 1989.

[11] Frank Kalupa and Harrell Allen, "Future directions in public relations education," Public Relations Review, 8: 31-45, Summer, 1982.

[12] Frank Wylie, "Is education keeping pace with demands of the profession?," Public Relations Journal, 38: 20-22, February, 1982.

move public relations education into the twenty-first century. Sharpe said public relations students should acquire a liberal arts base on which to build. He said students benefit from some previous communication job experience, from the maturity gained from age and life experience, and from undergraduate degree programs that provide a base of knowledge upon which to build an understanding of public relations and management principles. Grunig stated that public relations education will probably be most at home in a school of journalism. He says public relations belongs in a communication profession with other communication professions such as journalism, broadcasting and advertising and that public relations education must consist of five elements: a broad liberal education, communication skills, knowledge necessary for management, knowledge of the organization and practical experience.[13]

Fitch-Hauser, Roach Barker, and Barker (1987) related the findings from the 1987 Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education survey of public relations education in the United States and Canada. Of 2342 surveys mailed, 210 respondents reported that they did offer degrees in public relations. One curriculum issue question concerned the importance of supervised public relations experience or internships for students. "Overall 87.2% said that internships are required by their programs, while 12.8% reported that internships are optional. This emphasis on the importance of internships was consistent across all the departments in the sample."[14]

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[13] Melvin Sharpe and James Grunig, "Hard thinking on education," Public Relations Journal, 41: 27-32, April, 1985.

[14] Margaret Fitch-Hauser, Deborah Roach Barker and Larry Barker, "A survey of public relations education in the U.S. and Canada," ACA Bulletin, 68: 80-89, April, 1989.

Brody (1985) believes that "public relations curricula are the result of multiple influences." Brody stated that even with the frequent calls for change, public relations education remains relatively constant. However one change Brody noted was that the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) has been slowly moving toward more practice-oriented curricula.[15]

Anderson (1986) found that a recent public relations education survey showed practitioners and educators to be in agreement on what public relations education for undergraduates should be. This survey, conducted by the Commission on Undergraduate Public Relations Education in May 1985 was to determine what should be taught to public relations students. Over 1500 questionnaires were mailed out and 544 were returned. "The stunningly high ranking given to internships (6.67 overall) by all concerned indicates that much more attention needs to be paid by educators and practitioners alike to assure the high quality of such experiences."[16]

[15] E.W. Brody, "What ought to be taught students of public relations?" Public Relations Quarterly, 30: 6-9, Spring, 1985.

[16] James Anderson, "By the books," Public Relations Journal, 42: 16-18, April, 1986.

Method

The method used to gather this information was a telephone survey which was developed by the researchers. The telephone survey method was selected for two reasons -- one, because the survey was conducted during summer, the direct telephone survey was judged to be a more effective means to reach the target population; and, two, because a telephone survey generally has a higher response rate and the results can be obtained much quicker than with a mail survey.

To pretest the survey, the interviewer called ten schools from the target population. The survey was administered and timed. It took approximately two to three minutes to ask the first nine questions that were required of each school. If a school had a student-operated agency, the survey took longer, usually four to five minutes. After the pretest, the researcher then reviewed the wording of several questions and made necessary changes.

The telephone survey was used to contact all accredited journalism programs in the United States which were listed as having a public relations sequence, major, emphasis or concentration. The 1989

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication directory (AEJMC) listed 179 schools which offered public relations in one of these formats.

The survey was completed over six consecutive business days (from Tuesday through the following Tuesday). Each of the targeted 179 schools was called to allow a fair chance at responding to the survey. The caller asked for either the chair of the department or a public relations faculty member to answer the questions. If no one was available, a call-back time was recorded and the school was called again at a later time.

A total of 110 schools answered the survey for a response rate of 61.4%. Of these 110 schools, 17 reported they had student-operated public relations/advertising agencies -9.49% of the target 179 schools.

Definitions

In this study these terms will be used according to the following definitions:

Student-operated public relations/advertising agency

An agency which is not a classroom experience, but one that is on-going and primarily operated by public relations students.

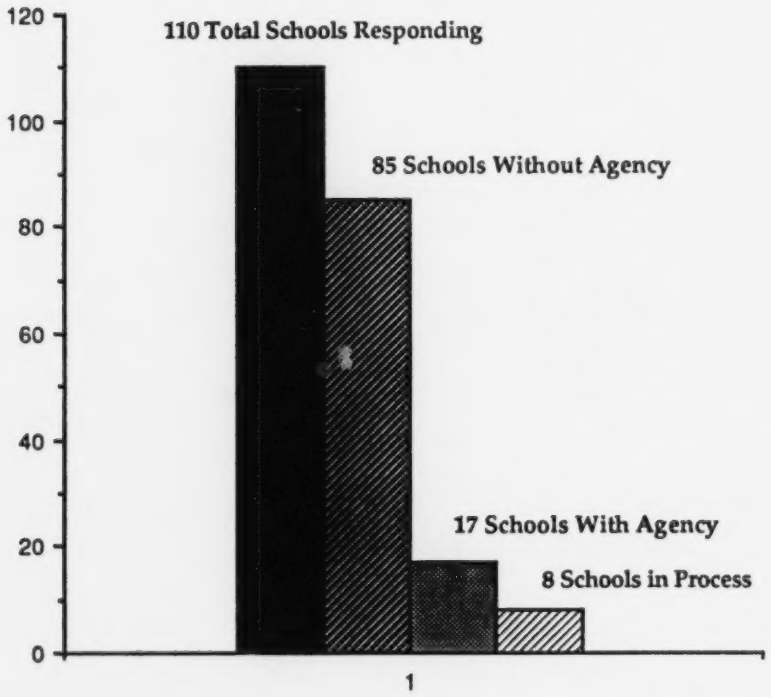
Accredited schools

Journalism programs in the United States which have been accredited according to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and are listed in the 1989 AEJMC Directory.

Results

The telephone survey had an overall response rate of 61.4%- 110 schools from the sample population of 179 accredited journalism programs responded. The total number of student-operated agencies found in the sample population was 17 of 179 schools. The survey responses also indicated that eight schools (4.4%) were in the process of establishing an agency to begin in the near future. Of the 17 schools having a student-operated agency, the primary sponsor of the agency was the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) with 12 schools sponsored by PRSSA, three schools sponsored by the department of journalism/communication and two schools who did not indicate the primary sponsor. (See Figure 1 on page 20)

61.4% Response Rate of Total Population



Profile of Existing Agencies

Size of program

Of the 17 schools with agencies, the majority of schools (5) indicated 51-100 students enrolled in public relations study. Four schools reported 101-150 students enrolled. The remaining seven schools had either fewer than 50 or more than 150 students (one school did not know.)

Ten schools had between one and three faculty members (both full and part time were counted). Six schools responding had between four and six faculty members and only one school responded that it had between seven and nine members on its public relations faculty.

Student Organizations

Of the 17 schools with agencies, 16 had a student chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and one school was in the process of beginning a chapter. PRSSA was also the primary sponsor of the agency at 12 schools. Only two schools had a chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). Many schools added that their city or community had a professional chapter of IABC which students could join.

Agency adviser

The primary adviser of each student agency was a public relations faculty member and one adviser was also the head of the public relations sequence. Only one school reported that the agency adviser was compensated for his or her work. This compensation was not, however, any extra stipend or release time, but simply written into the teaching contract. The remaining advisors were not compensated in any way.

Agency operation

Most agencies reported staffs in the range of one to 20 students. Six schools had one to 10 members and four schools had 11-20 members. The other six schools responding had over 21 students.

The majority of schools (10) reported business accounts in the range between one and 10. Next, five schools listed between 11 and 20 accounts and only two schools did not know the number of accounts.

Of the agencies, 12 charged a fee for their services. The fees for the services were received by the agency and used for its own purposes in all 17 of the schools. The use of the money was at the discretion of the agency itself.

In only three schools did some of the students in the agency receive financial compensation for their work. The majority of schools (14) reported that students work on a volunteer basis only.

Participation

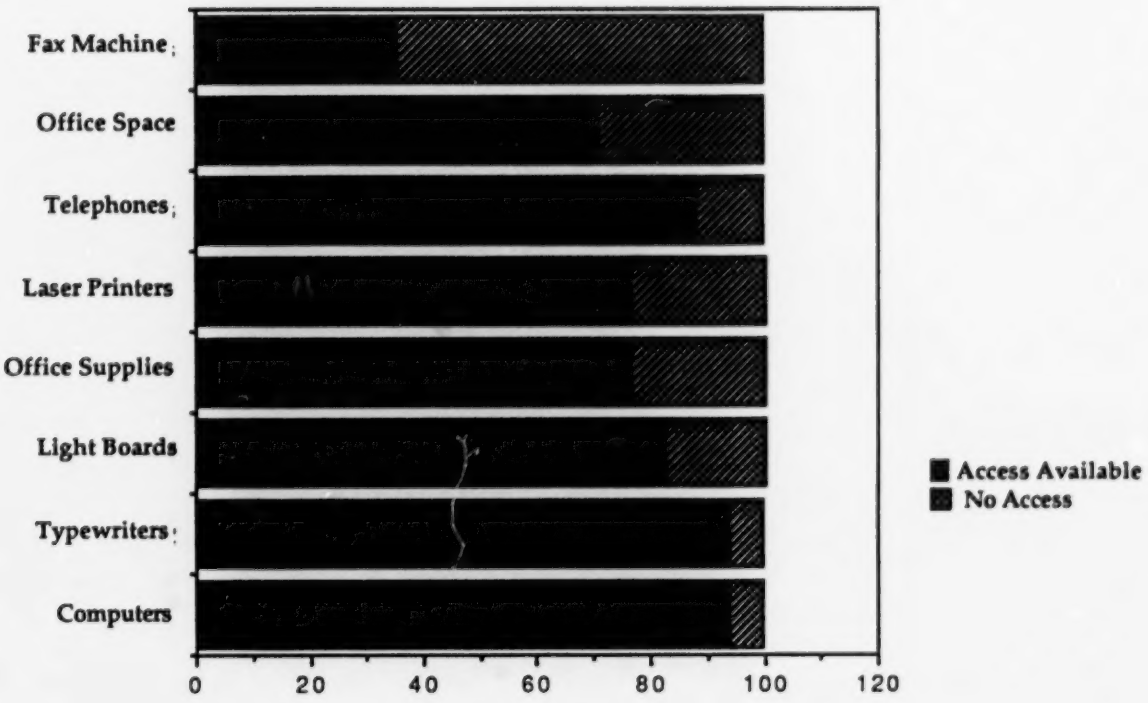
Only one of the 17 schools required participation in the agency as part of the formal education curriculum. At this school, the agency was one of four areas in which students could choose to work while earning college credit. The experience was regarded as a practicum and up to four hours could be counted toward the degree.

The remaining schools did not require participation for many reasons including that they simply wanted to keep it a volunteer experience. Three schools responded that they had too many students to even consider requiring participation. In only two schools did students have the option to earn credit for work in the agency.

Access to equipment

Most schools (12) reported that their agency had office space and 16 schools reported having access to computers and typewriters. Thirteen had access to office supplies and laser printers. Five schools reported that their agency did not have adequate office space and that this factor was hindering their performance as an agency. (See Figure 2 on page 24.)

Access to Equipment

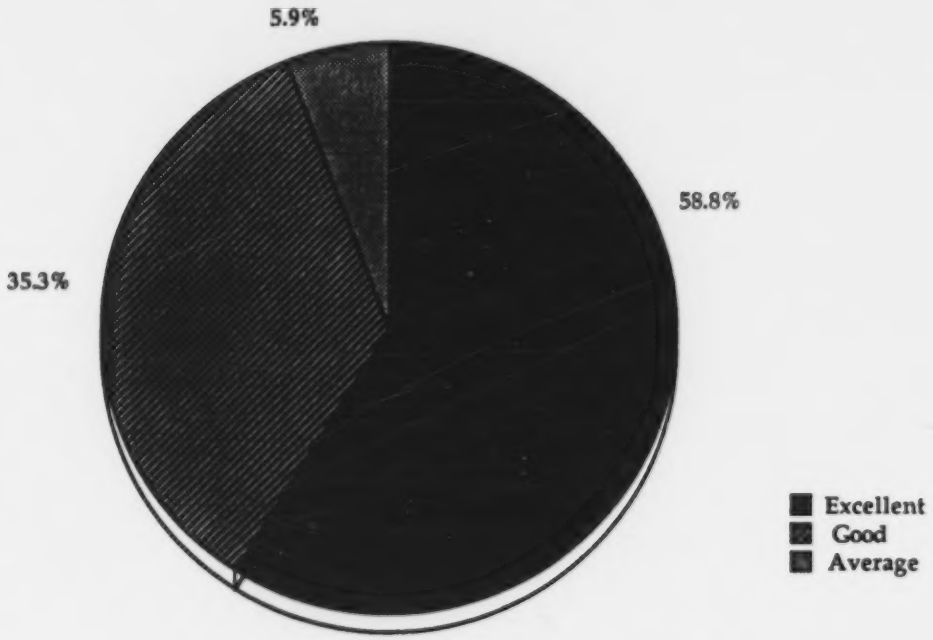


Educators' Evaluations

Educators rated the success of their agency as a learning tool as excellent at nine of the 13 schools, good at six schools and two were undecided. The success of the agency was also evaluated in terms of the hands-on experience it provided students. Again, educators ranked the agency as excellent in the majority of schools. Ten responded excellent, six responded good, and only one said average. (See Figure 3 on page 26)

The overall rating of the agency to the public relations students' learning experience was ranked very useful by 16 schools and somewhat useful by only one school.

Agency as Providing Hands-on Experience



Profile of schools without student agencies

The other 93 schools responding to the survey did not have a student-operated agency.

Primary reason for not offering agency

The majority of these schools responded that they had not considered the agency idea at all. Twenty schools (21.5%) said for various reasons they had not even considered the student-operated agency. However, 14 schools felt that while the agency might be a good idea, their students were receiving hands-on experience in other forms such as internship programs and student publications. Only two schools reported that a lack of funding was a reason for not offering an agency and only one school had a negative response and said that the agency had failed at their school.

Another reason that schools were hesitant to offer a student agency was to avoid competition with public relations practitioners in surrounding markets and to "avoid stepping on peoples' toes."

Average size of program

Of 93 schools, 30 (32.3%) had between 51 and 100 public relations students. Twenty-two schools reported between one and 50 students and the remaining 41 schools listed various sizes of enrollment figures from 101 to over 401 students.

The majority, 61 schools, listed one to three public relations faculty members followed by 25 schools listing four to six. Only seven schools had

over six faculty members.

Student organizations

Although these schools did not offer a student-operated agency, 62 (66.7%) had a chapter of PRSSA and 12 (12.9%) had a chapter of IABC. There were also six schools in the process of establishing a PRSSA chapter.

Summary and Conclusions

While the educators indicated overall (70%) that an agency is very useful to a student's learning experience, only 17 of 110 schools actually employ this agency as part of their public relations program. (See Figure 4 on page 32) This research shows that while the agency appears to be a good idea in theory, in practice it may take more effort to get started than the school is able to expend to establish one. However, educators are concerned with the learning experience of public relations students. Fourteen schools without agencies (15.1%) felt their students earned hands-on experience through internships and student publications. "We have certainly thought about it (student agency), but internships are a better alternative," added an educator from Michigan.

In schools where the agency does exist, it is for the most part, an extension of a PRSSA chapter. Only two reported their agency was sponsored by prospective departments and all 17 either had a student chapter of PRSSA or was already in the process of beginning one. No agencies were sponsored by IABC.

Of the 110 schools, the majority (71 schools) had between one to three full and part-time public relations faculty members on staff. Thirty-one schools listed four to six members, six schools listed between seven and nine members and only two had over ten public relations faculty members. (See Figure 5 on page 33) The number of public relations students in the total

sample ranged from one to over 400 at the 110 schools. Most schools had between one to 150 public relations students. Twenty-three schools had one to 50 students, 35 had 51-100 students and 20 schools had 101-150 students. The remaining 32 schools each had over 151 students. (See Figure 6 on page 34)

When asked what they considered to be the weakest area today in public relations education, the most prevalent issue was that writing skills are still the weakest subject taught. This category had 27 responses for a 24.5% response rate. Another major area of concern was teaching research skills with a total of 21 responses. Various other answers included courses in ethics, problem solving, management and providing hands-on experience. (See Figure 7 on page 35)

This profile of student-operated agencies also yielded interesting comments from public relations educators. Educators from those schools which do support student-operated agencies said they did not believe that the agency experience is all that students need from their educational experience.

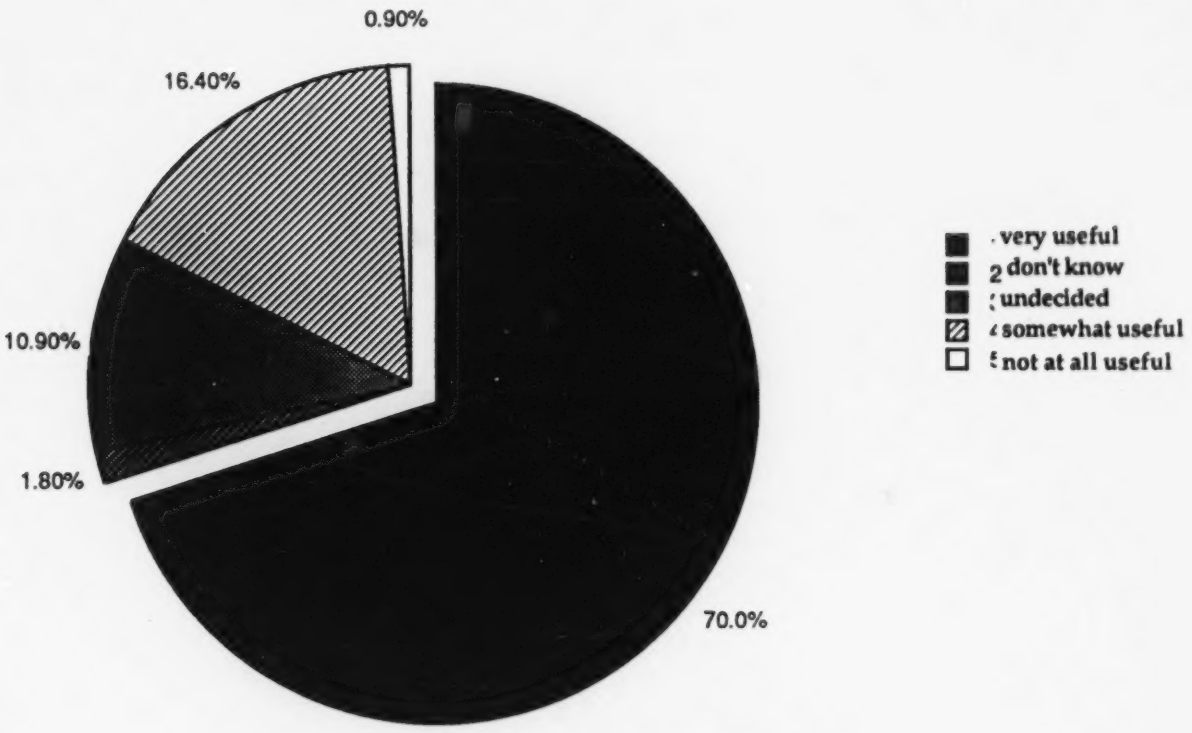
But the experiential learning that student-operated agencies offer is one outlet to put theory into practice, according to one educator in Florida. "It's great to have theory, but not if you can't put it into practice. (The agency) teaches students to realize their entrepreneurial skills also." Another educator in Minnesota added that the agency was a "good reality thing."

Although 93 schools did not participate in the student-operated agency, most educators felt the agency experience was a positive experience to students. "(The agency) is a viable option to test what they learn in class," said one educator from Minnesota. Sixty-one schools rated the agency as

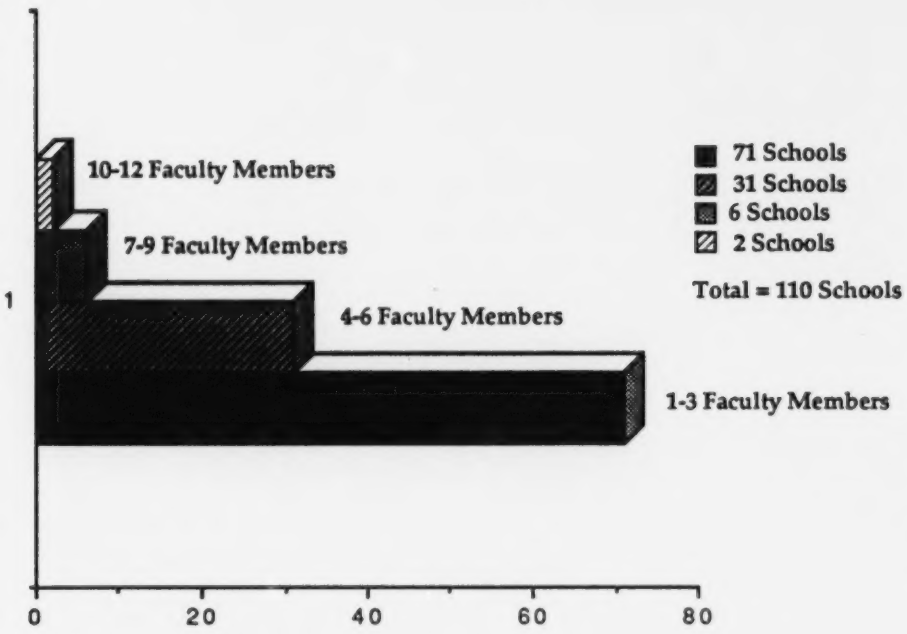
very useful to the overall learning experience and 17 rated it as somewhat useful. However 12 schools were undecided and one even felt the experience was not useful at all. "(I am not) generally in favor of them. I'm not sure the student level should take money for work," an educator in Kentucky stressed. Another educator in Florida agreed by stating that "students should not be competing (with other professionals) by using cheap prices (for services)."

It is evident that while most educators at schools with agencies find them excellent as a learning tool (9 schools), overall these educators rated public relations writing as the first area of importance to students while the agency came in last. Next in importance was the internship experience. This rating indicates that although most educators believe the hands-on experience student-operated agencies offer is a good supplement to classwork, the basics of public relations education are the building blocks to successful application.

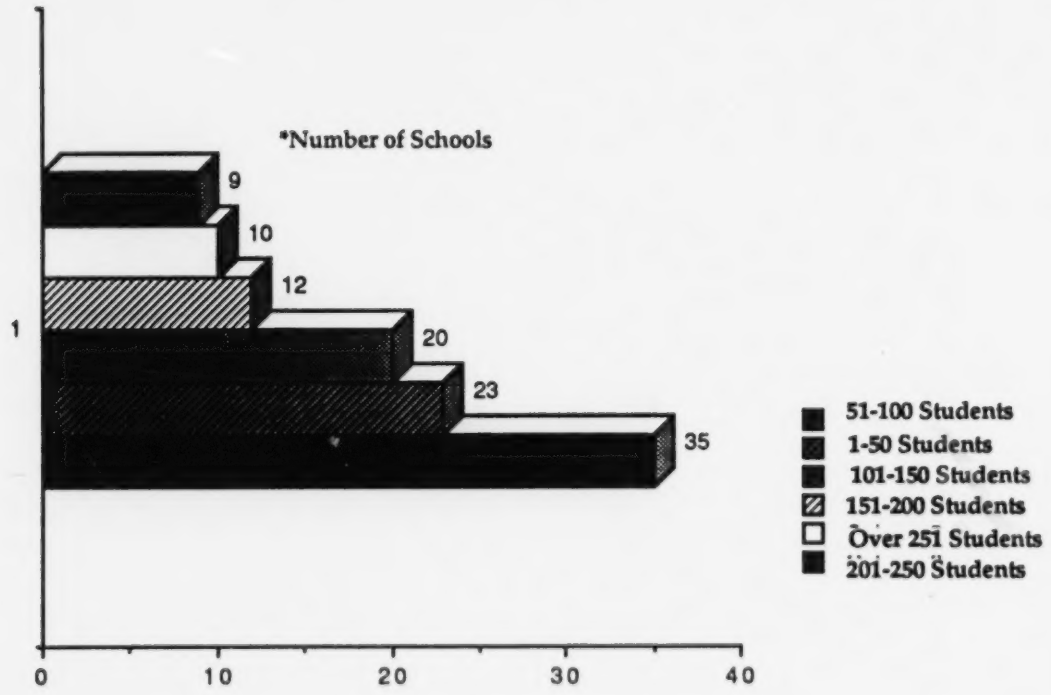
Agency as Learning Experience



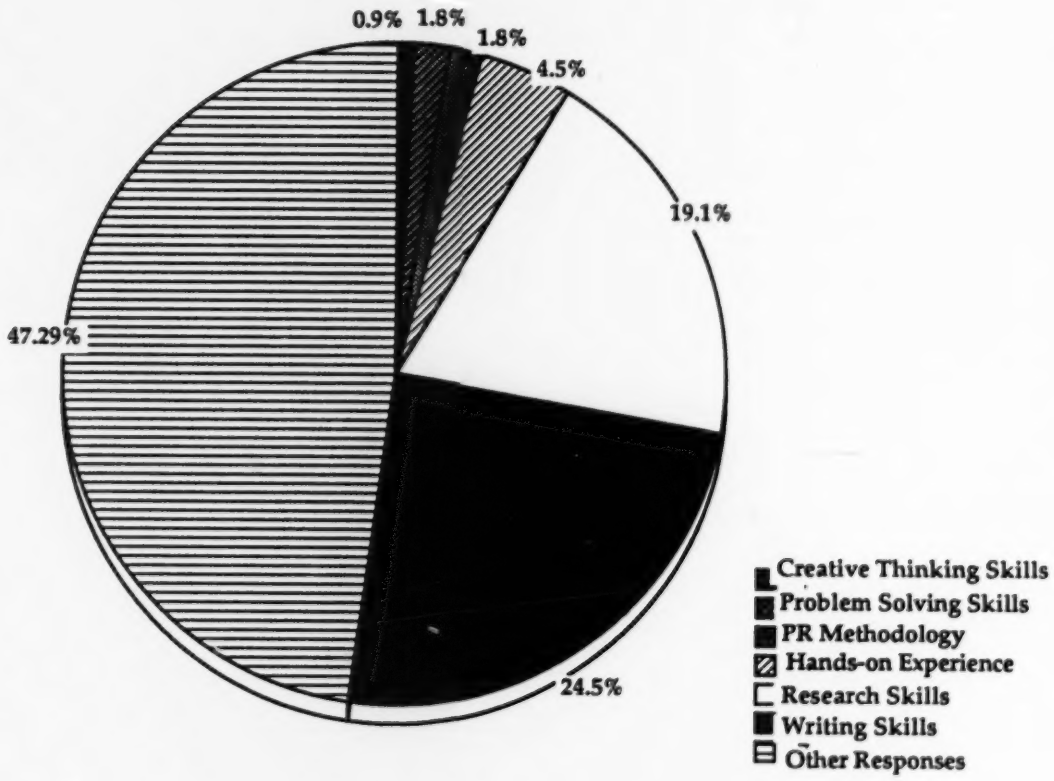
Size of Public Relations Faculty - Both Full and Part-time



Number of Public Relations Students Overall



Weakest Areas in Public Relations Education Today



Recommendation for future studies

This profile of accredited journalism schools provides a quantified account of how many student-operated agencies exist. While the survey had a 61.4% response rate, there is undoubtedly information that was not obtained. From this point, research should examine how public relations practitioners and educators agree and disagree on areas of public relations education, specifically the hands-on approach to teaching public relations through both student-operated agencies and internships. It is important to continually research changes in the public relations profession and update the approaches to teaching public relations.

Future studies should also concentrate on the cooperation between the professional practitioners and educators to create an effective system of public relations education. "It is time that public relations professionals recognize that they must support public relations education in a way that will translate into political impact within the decision processes of universities and colleges. Until such support is provided, the pace of change will remain distressingly slow."[1] If such cooperation is gained, then perhaps public relations students can have the best of both worlds - a challenging curriculum of sound public relations theory and the opportunity to gain hands-on experience.

[1] Melvin Sharpe, "Developing programs to help academia better prepare the next generation of practitioners," (Presented as a speech at the National Convention of the Public Relations Society of America, 1988.)

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Appendix A

h (Other_____)

i I don't know

Continue with everyone

4. Which ONE area do you see as being the weakest in public relations education today?

(Read out loud)

a Teaching creative thinking skills

b Teaching problem solving skills

c Providing hands-on experience for students

d Teaching public relations methodology

e Teaching research skills

f Teaching effective writing skills

g (Other_____)

h I don't know

5. How useful do you feel student-operated public relations/advertising agencies are to a students' overall learning experience?

(Read out loud)

a Very useful b Somewhat useful c Undecided d Not very useful

e Not at all

6. How many faculty, full and part-time, teach public relations at your school?

a 1-3 c 13-15 e over 25_____

b 4-6 f 16-18 j don't know

c 7-9 g 19-21

d 10-12 h 22-24

7. About how many students seek public relations as a major emphasis in your program?

7a 1-50 e 201-250 i Over 401_____

b 51-100 f 251-300 j Don't know

c 101-150 g 301-350

d 151-200 h 351-400

8. Does your school have a student chapter of IABC ?

8a yes b no c don't know d in process

9. Does your school have a student chapter of PRSSA?

9a yes b no c don't know d in process

STOP survey at this point if they do NOT have a student firm and thank them

If YES, continue survey with #10

Thank you so much for taking time to answer my survey questions. Your response has been very helpful to my research.

Do you have any additional comments you feel would be useful to this research?

Continue with survey

10. Who is the primary sponsor of your student agency?

10a Journalism department
b PRSSA
c IABC
d Other department
e Other PR/advertising agency
f Other outside sponsor_____
g Don't know

11. What is the name of your student-operated agency?

---

12. About how many students are on the staff of this agency?

11a 1-10
b 11-20
c 21-30
d 31-40
e 41-50
f 51-60
g 61-70
h 71-80
i Over 81_____
j don't know

13. Does your agency charge clients a fee for services?

12a yes
b no
c Don't know

Ask only if they raise money

14. Could you tell me basically who receives this money?

13a Sponsoring dept. b Agency itself c Outside sponsor

d Other_____ e Don't know

Continue with everyone

15. About how many accounts does this firm service?

14a 1-10 f 51-60

b 11-20 g 61-70

c 21-30 h over 71_____

d 31-40 i Not applicable

e 41-50 j Don't know

16. Who is primarily responsible for advising this organization?

15a PR faculty member only

b PR faculty member/head of department

c Advertising faculty member only

d Advertising faculty member/head of department

e Journalism faculty member only

f Journalism faculty member/head of department

g Graduate Student

h Outside professional PR practitioner

i Other_____

j Don't know

17. Is this person compensated for his or her work?

16a Yes b No c Don't know

Ask only if YES

18. How is this person compensated?

(Read out loud)

17a Lighter class load

b Higher salary

c Stipend

d Hourly pay

e Other_____

Continue with everyone

19. Are your PR students required to participate in this agency?

18a Yes b No

If YES, continue----- If NO, Skip to #22

20. How is it counted towards their degree?

19a Internship

b Class credit

c Practicum

d Other_____

e Don't know

21. How many academic credit hours of this agency work can be counted towards graduation?

20a 1-3 b 4-6 c 7-9 d 10-12 e None

f Other_____ g Don't know

Skip to #24

Only if NO Credit

22. What is your primary reason for NOT requiring student participation ?

21a Too many students to accommodate

b Only offered as extracurricular activity

c Are not able to require for degree

d Other_____

23. Can students earn credit for participation in this agency, even though it is not required? For example, an elective credit hour?

22a Yes b No c Other_____ d Don't know

Continue with everyone

24. Do students receive financial compensation?

23a Yes b No c Other_____ d Don't know

25. What type of equipment is available to your student PR firm? I'll read you a list and tell me whether or not they have access to them.

(Read out loud)

24 Computers	a yes	b no
25 Typewriters	a yes	b no
26 Light boards	a yes	b no
27 Office supplies	a yes	b no
28 Laser printers	a yes	b no
29 Telephone	a yes	b no
30 Office space	a yes	b no
31 Fax machine	a yes	b no

26. Overall, how would you rate the success of <u>your</u> student pr/advertising agency as a learning tool in teaching public relations?

(Read out loud)

32a Excellent b good c undecided d average e poor

27. Overall, how would you rate the success of <u>your</u> student PR agency in providing hands-on experience to your students?

(Read out loud)

33a Excellent b good c undecided d average e poor

28. How many total credit hours do you require for graduation?

Write down #

---

29. Is this based on a semester or quarter schedule?

34a semester b quarterly

30. Now for the final question, I'm going to ask you to rank order five areas of public relations education. I'd like you to tell me how you would rank them in importance from 1-5 with 1 being the most important to the students learning experience.

35 Public relations writing classes

36 News writing classes

37 Internships

38 Public relations methodology

39 Student-operated agencies

Thank you
Any comments

Appendix B

Telephone Survey Guidelines

Hello, may I speak to the chairperson of the journalism department or a public relations faculty member please?

(If neither can answer, ask when is a good time to call back and record on response sheet.)

Hi, my name is Tonya Carrick and I'm a graduate assistant in the Department of Journalism at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. We are conducting a phone survey of accredited journalism programs concerning student-operated public relations/advertising firms. The survey should only take a few minutes, may I please have your help?

(If they would like to verify survey, say the following)
My research advisor is Dr. Becky McDonald and she may be reached at 317-285-8209 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Continue with survey
Follow survey guidelines in recording responses.

Appendix C

(Answer Sheet)

School_____

Chairperson_____

Day & Time of Call_____

Call back time_____

1. **a** yes **b** no **c** in process

2. **a** yes **b** no

3. a b c d e f g_____

4. a b c d e f g_____

5. a b c d e

6. a b c d e f g h i_____ j don't know

7. a b c d e f g h i_____ j don't know

8. **a** yes **b** no **c** don't know

9. **a** yes **b** no **c** don't know

STOP here if NO agency

Continue with survey

10. a b c d_____

e_____ f_____ g don't know

11. NAME (no #)_____

12. 11a b c d e f g h i_____

j don't know

13 12a yes charge fee b no fee c don't know

14. 13 a b c d_____ e don't know

15. 14a b c d e f g h_____

i not applicable j don't know

16. 15a b c d e f g h i_____

j don't know

17. 16a yes b no c don't know

18. 17a b c d e_____

19. 18a yes b no

20. 19a b c d_____ e don't know

21. 20a b c d e f_____ g don't know

22. 21a b c d_____

23. 22a yes b no c_____ d don't know

24. [23]a yes b no c_____ d don't know

25. **Equipment listing**

[24] Computers yes no

[25] Typewriters yes no

[26] Light boards yes no

[27] Office supplies yes no

[28] Laser printers yes no

[29] Telephone yes no

[30] Office space yes no

[31] Fax machine yes no

26. [32]a b c d e

27. [33]a b c d e

28. **Write down # of hours**_____

29. [34]a semester b quarterly

30. Rank order

[35] Public relations writing classes
[36] News writing classes
[37] Internships
[38] Public relations methodology
[39] Student-operated agencies